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¶1. Per reftel, the following is Embassy Kabul's submission for the 2009 Country Report on Terrorism. Begin Text:

In 2009, an Afghan presidential election year, Afghanistan continued to confront the challenges of building a stable, democratic government in the face of a sophisticated, multi-faceted insurgency that increasingly employs terrorist tactics. This insurgency targeted coalition forces, the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), foreign diplomatic missions, Afghan government officials, and Afghan voters.

Separate but interdependent extremist organizations led by U.S.-designated terrorists Mullah Omar (Taliban), Jalaluddin Haqqani (Haqqani Network) and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin - HIG) notably increased their use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and coordinated attacks using multiple suicide bombers, resulting in an increase from 2008 in overall casualties. The Taliban, in particular, stepped up the pace of its attacks and simultaneously increased its shadow government presence throughout the country.

With support from the civilian and military international community, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) is working to build and strengthen its national security forces and establish effective law-enforcement mechanisms and improved governance to increase stability and counter Taliban presence and influence. In addition, President Karzai announced in his November 19 inaugural speech that it would be a priority of his new administration to reintegrate those lower level Taliban fighters into mainstream society who were willing to lay down arms, sever all ties to al-Qa'ida, and accept the Afghan Constitution.

Since its March 2005 inception, the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) program - successor to the earlier Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program - has disbanded 689 illegal armed groups and collected over 45,000 weapons. Beginning in 2007, DIAG has offered development assistance to qualifying districts. Eighty-seven of the 132 targeted districts currently qualify for this assistance and are considered to be in compliance with DIAG disarmament regulations.

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) led the coalition forces' counterinsurgency campaign, using a combination of counterinsurgency means and methods, including synchronized use of combat (air and ground forces) and non-combat means (building civil governance and aiding reconstruction and development in conjunction with UNAMA) to fight extremism.

The Commander, U.S. Central Command, maintained command and

control of U.S. counterterrorism (CT) forces operating in Afghanistan. CT operations were coordinated with U.S. forces at the Headquarters of U.S. Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A) and Combined Joint Task Force 82 (CJTF 82), the successor to CJTF 101. Special Operations Forces conducting combined operations and foreign internal defense operated under the Commander, USFOR-A. United States CT forces target insurgent leaders, and insurgent training and logistics centers, with the objective of eliminating terrorists and facilitating reconstruction and development. The Afghan National Army (ANA), and to a lesser extent, the Afghan National Police (ANP) continue to lead in the majority of counterterrorism operations, in close cooperation with coalition forces. The Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) assumed lead responsibility from coalition forces for municipal security in Kabul City in 2008. It continues to work in close partnership with ISAF to develop the capability necessary to assume the lead in security across Afghanistan. Partly in response to their growing inability to prevail against coalition and ANSF forces in conventional encounters, militants increasingly resorted to terrorist tactics to intimidate ordinary Afghans. These tactics included greater use of increasingly sophisticated IEDs along key travel arteries, assassination of Afghan government officials, and the use of suicide bombers and direct fire attacks in population centers where Afghan civilians are used as shields.

Integrated civilian-military counterinsurgency approaches in the east have continued to yield some successes. Nonetheless, the anti-government insurgency remained a capable, determined, and resilient threat to stability and to the expansion of government authority, particularly in the south and east. The insurgency continued to suffer heavy combat losses, including among senior leaders, but its ability to obtain al-Qa'ida support and recruit soldiers remained undiminished. Taliban information operations were aggressive and sophisticated, including, for example, Mullah Omar's injunctions on the Taliban website for Taliban fighters to avoid harming civilians and pulse local communities regarding their satisfaction with Taliban shadow government officials' performance.

Streams of Taliban financing from across the border in Pakistan, along with funds gained from narcotics trafficking and kidnapping, have allowed the insurgency to strengthen its military and technical capabilities. Narcotics trafficking in particular is a primary financing mechanism of terrorist/insurgent operations, and although poppy production decreased 22% in 2009 and the number of poppy-free provinces increased from 18 to 20, the actual progress this represents in terms of reducing revenue streams is not yet clear.

Violence in 2009 reached the highest level since 2001. In addition to targeting Afghan and coalition military forces, insurgents and criminals attacked Afghan government officials and civil servants, Afghan police forces and recruits, humanitarian actors, and civilians. Foreign civilians, including diplomats, were deliberately targeted. Two high-profile terrorist attacks against foreign diplomats in Kabul City this year included the October 8 suicide car bombing of the Indian Embassy that killed at least 17 and the October 28 attack on a UNAMA guesthouse that killed 5 UN employees and 3 other Afghans. The Taliban claimed responsibility for both attacks.

Throughout the year, insurgents targeted NGOs, Afghan journalists, government workers, UN workers, and recipients of NGO assistance. They targeted teachers, pupils (especially girls), and schools. Attacks on girls schools in the east and south increased, and Taliban militants were suspected in late April and early May of using an unidentified gas to sicken girls and teachers at two schools in the town of Charikar in Parwan Province and one school in Mahmud Ragi, a small town north of Kabul. Insurgents coupled threats and attacks against NGOs with continued targeting of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), de-mining teams, and construction crews working on roads and other infrastructure

projects. Additionally, insurgents and criminals continue to kidnap foreigners and Afghans. While insurgents conduct most abductions for ransom, presumably as a means of raising money to support their operations, they have also sought to use victims to negotiate with the GIROA and the international community.

Taliban militants made a concentrated effort to thwart the August 20 Presidential and Provincial elections by intimidating voters and attacking election officials. There were more than 1000 insurgent attacks in August, approximately 20% of which occurred on Election Day. Although there were few resulting casualties, voter turnout was notably lower than for the 2004 election, and, in some areas in the south and east, turnout was effectively shut down altogether as a result of Taliban intimidation.

SAFE HAVENS

Afghan-Pakistan Border. Despite the efforts of ISAF and Afghan and Pakistani security forces, instability along the Pakistan-Afghanistan frontier continued to provide the Taliban, al-Qa'ida and other militant groups with leadership mobility and the ability to rest, recruit, and conduct training and operational planning that target international and U.S. interests in particular. Numerous senior and mid-level Taliban and al-Qa'ida operatives have been captured or killed, but insurgent and terrorist leaders in Pakistan continued to plot attacks and to cultivate stronger operational connections that radiated outward from Pakistan to affiliates throughout the Middle East, North Africa and Europe.

Afghanistan. The GIROA, in concert with ISAF/NATO forces and the international community, continued efforts to eliminate terrorist safe havens and build security on the Afghan side of the border. The porous border areas remained contested, however, with Taliban, Haqqani, HIG and al-Qa'ida operatives crossing the border from Pakistan into Afghanistan to conduct attacks throughout the country. Narcotics trafficking from Afghanistan into Pakistan, poppy cultivation and criminal networks are particularly prevalent in the south and west of the country, constituting a major source of funding for the insurgency as well as corruption in Afghanistan. Al-Qa'ida leadership in Pakistan maintained its support to militants inside Afghanistan, providing funding, training, and personnel to facilitate terrorist and insurgent operations. Anti-Coalition organizations such as HIG continued to operate in coordination with al-Qa'ida, Taliban, and other insurgent groups, primarily in the east.

End Text

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